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ROCA ROJO EDGES BELIEVE IN BERTIE TO WIN CHURCHILL DISTAFF TURF MILE

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, May 6, 2017) – Sheep Pond Partners, Newport Stables and Bradley Thoroughbreds' **Roca Rojo (IRE)** edged a game **Believe in Bertie** by a head to win the 32nd running of the \$300,000 Churchill Distaff Turf Mile (GII) for fillies and mares.

Trained by **Chad Brown** and ridden by **Florent Geroux**, Roca Rojo covered the mile on a "good" turf course in 1:37.53. The victory gave Brown back-to-back stakes victories having won the Humana Distaff (GI) with Paulassilverlining.

Believe in Bertie led the field of seven through fractions of :25.23 and :49.20 with Roca Rojo in closest pursuit. At the top of the stretch, Roca Rojo drew on even terms with Believe in Bertie and pushed slightly ahead only to have Believe in Bertie close the gap in deep stretch.

The victory was worth \$182,280 to Roca Rojo, who increased her earnings to \$491,542 with a record of 8-6-1-0 with two graded-stakes victories.

Roca Rojo is a 5-year-old daughter of Strategic Prince (GB) out of the Orpen mare Lucy Diamonds (IRE).

Favored in the field of seven, Roca Rojo returned \$4.60, \$3 and \$2.40. Believe in Bertie, ridden by **Shaun Bridgmohan**, returned \$4 and \$3 with **Linda** finishing another 3 ¼ lengths back under **Brian Hernandez Jr.** and paying \$2.80 to show.

It was another neck back to **Mississippi Delta** in fourth with **Prize Exhibit (GB)**, **Hillhouse High** and **Harmonize** following in order.

CHURCHILL DISTAFF TURF MILE QUOTES

Florent Geroux (rider of Roca Rojo, winner) – "I was right off the leader (**Believe in Bertie**). My filly was closer than she usually is. She likes to sit back and make one run, but there was a lack of pace in the race. I decided to put her closer and make sure I wasn't going to be trapped behind. Down the stretch, I thought I had it pretty easily, but the other filly tried to come back at her. My filly was the best."

Chad Brown (trainer of Roca Rojo, winner) – "She's been training really well. We knew she could handle the soft going. She's equally as good on firm. We were a little concerned about the pace and it played out that way. It was a soft pace with a very good horse setting the fractions, a really solid horse. She had her work cut out for her to run her down. We'll look at the Just a Game (GI), that makes a lot of sense, in five weeks at a mile at Belmont."

Shaun Bridgmohan (rider of Believe in Bertie, runner-up) – "She was comfortable in the going. She ran hard. It was a tough beat. She came back in the final yards and the other filly just got the better of us."

Brian Hernandez Jr. (rider of Linda, third-place finisher) – "We had a good trip. Unfortunately, we did draw the one hole, but we were able to work out a trip. Our filly is coming around."

Ian Wilkes (trainer of Linda, third-place finisher) – "The slow first quarter compromised our filly. She was just kind of sitting there with nowhere to go."

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